

**Business Administration and Business Economics****Characteristics of the Emergent Slow Tourism Sector in Thailand:  
Evidence from Samut Prakan****Chantip Chamdermpadejsuk<sup>1</sup>, Fuangfa Amponstira<sup>2</sup>, John Walsh<sup>3</sup>**

**Abstract:** Slow tourism is an emergent concept that investigates ways in which people can reject the tenets of mass tourism with its ever increasing velocity of consumption and expenditure. Instead, it offers way in which people can engage with local customs, institutions and people at a pace which is also less damaging to the environment. However, the facilities and services that such a form of tourism requires is little known to destination managers (although perhaps not to specific facility managers) in both the private and public sectors. In order to determine the extent to which understanding of this issue is widespread in Thailand, which is a country where the tourism industry is vital in maintaining the economy, and where a range of different types of tourism have become available. The province of Samut Prakan has been selected for this purpose and a convenience sample of 400 respondents was taken in a total of four different destinations using a questionnaire based on the UNWTO's Recife Declaration on Slow Tourism. It is found that Thai slow tourists in the sample demonstrate some spiritual qualities in their desire for experiences that are not accounted for in the original declaration and it is suggested that this be adjusted accordingly.

**Keywords:** elderly tourism; slow tourism; pilgrimage; Thailand; tourism

**JEL Classification:** Z32

**1. Introduction**

Although tourism is understood to be a vital dynamic factor sustaining Thailand's flagging economy, most attention has been paid to the international sector. The domestic sector is often overlooked by policy-makers yet it is still important in its own right. One recent estimate shows domestic tourism to have increased by 8.0% in 2017, following 8.3% growth in the preceding year (Kasikorn Research, 2017).

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Domestic tourists made between 158.2-159.7 million trips within the country in 2016 (Kasikorn Research, 2017). While it is possible to envisage domestic and international decision as alternative decisions for consumers based on relative costs (e.g. Tol, 2007; Eugenio-Martin & Campos-Soria, 2011), there are reasons to consider these two to be quite distinct options in the case of Thailand and, presumably, offer countries with societies considered to be high-context in nature (e.g. Gudykunst & Nishida, 1986). People in high-context cultures, it is argued, do not view different tourism destinations or experiences as being subject to a simple arithmetic of monetary values and standard forms of satisficing behaviour means that advanced computations are not considered. In part, this is due to asymmetric benefits accruing from specific tourist experiences that mean more to people, principally Thai people, who are more closely attuned to them and their meaning. This is most closely seen with respect to aspects of the Buddhist philosophy, which is the professed belief of the majority of the population. Beliefs concerning specific local effects of Buddhist monks or relics have been assimilated by many Thai people to an extent that is much less likely for other people. It is argued, therefore, that the characteristics of domestic tourism in Thailand are different than for international tourism, although there may be shared characteristics with domestic tourism in other countries with a high-context cultural background.

When searching for a suitable model of tourist sector development that would assist in the promotion of Thailand's domestic tourism, one possibility is the slow tourism paradigm that has emerged in recent years around the world. Slow in this case implies a less-frenetic or fraught method of decision-making, encouraging quite literally slower forms of travel with higher levels of engagement with local people and institutions. This approach is more likely to result in money spent on local products and companies rather than bleeding out of the local area via chain businesses. It is also likely to result in less severe environmental impacts both on the local area and, also, on the physical environment overall (Caffyn, 2012).

Slow tourism seems to bear some similarities with well-established features of Thai domestic tourism: that is, there is a focus on land rather than air travel, focus on a specific local destination and willingness to indulge in local specialities directly and in the form of souvenirs. Caffyn (Caffyn, 2012) describes the typical pattern: "[It] ... suits the type of break and holiday where people continue to move round rather than base themselves in one place. With slow tourism more emphasis is usually placed on a single destination. The model might perhaps be of a holiday where visitors venture out from a central base to explore the nearby locale over a period of several days, perhaps enjoying a range of activities but probably coming back to the same accommodation. This type of tourism experience is commonly adopted by elderly travelers, when elderly people are able to enjoy tourist activities. This provides an important commercial opportunity for Thailand's tourism industry but, in an ageing society, represents an important measure of social equity. The World

Tourism Organization's Recife Charter on Senior Tourism (UNWTO, 1996) explicitly drew the link between ageing and social ills including loss of freedom, relative deprivation, loss of status and so forth which might all be countered by the experiences of tourism (Dann, 2002).

Consequently, this paper focuses on the conjunction of slow tourism and the elderly in Thailand with a local base offering several types of nearby activity. One province has been selected as the research site and a quantitative method of data collection was employed. It is anticipated that the analysis will lead to the formulation of useful recommendations for different stakeholders within the Thai tourism industry.

## 2. Literature Review

Contemporary tourism is a capitalist venture and necessarily, therefore, involves creative destruction of the resources it employs. It has become part of the neoliberal project of advancing capitalism through, in part, the commodification of nature. Ecosystems, social as well as physical, become bound into a world of accounting: "As ecosystem science increasingly serves as a metrical technology for the commodification of ecosystem services, its fine and fragile distinctions increasingly bear the weight of capital circulation (Robertson, 2006)." Given the dominance of neoliberal thought, it seems to be a pragmatic strategy to apportion economic value to natural resources with a view to promoting the understanding of diversity and sustainability (Gómez-Baggethun & Ruiz-Pérez, 2011).

In such circumstances, the governance of tourism must make its treasures available to those who are tourists in as sustainable a way as possible using market and price mechanisms to regulate access (Cousins, Evans & Sadler, 2009). Nevertheless, there are various forces that contribute to tourism being a force promoting uneven development and enhancing economic inequality (e.g. King & Dinkoksung, 2014). These include the concentration of revenue-gathering activities in a few hands, mostly out-of-area interests, together with the generally low level of local entrepreneurial skills and the generation of mostly low-skilled and low-waged jobs associated with tourism. Many such jobs are created in the hotel and recreation sector and involve both domestic and cross-border migration (Joppe, 2012). A study of the emerging tourism market in Louang Prabang found that other jobs were generated in the informal transportation sector and other service activities, while the bulk of the revenue generated left the area through the owners of larger accommodation units (Southiseng & Walsh, 2011). The development of the tourism sector, therefore, has multiple forms of impact upon the development of a country as a whole and it certainly affects the unevenness of both development and of inequality and of life opportunities. One particular example of this is in the case of tourism opportunities for the elderly. As the world moves towards an era of ageing societies – the number

of older persons in the world (i.e. 60 years or above) was 917 million in 2017 and this number is expected to rise to 2.1 billion in 2050 and then 3.1 billion in 2100 (UN, 2018). The population of ageing people in Thailand is now estimated to be approximately 8 million (13% of total population) and was expected to rise in line with international trends (AgeingAsia, n.d.). The provision of social services to elderly people is limited, irrespective of the comparatively high level of reverence and deference paid to older people in Thailand. Nevertheless, older people suffer from declining lifestyle opportunities and experience as they become older. This issue was addressed directly by the UN's Recife Charter on Senior Tourism, which acknowledged on the one hand the potential problems faced by elderly people, in terms of declining status, income and opportunities for self-realisation and, on the other hand, the opportunities provided for tourism development by a new cohort of tourists who might have pent-up desire to explore the world and accumulated income, supplemented by pensions, to do so (of course, not all the elderly in a society or indeed in any country have the opportunity to accumulate surplus income and pensions). However, there are indicators that senior citizens in a number of countries do have considerable spending power and, in a world with changing demographic characteristics and regulatory frameworks concerning inheritance, the willingness to spend that income.

Elderly people are still people, of course and, as such, make consumption decisions in the same way that consumer behaviour models would indicate (e.g. Kristensen, Mortenson & Gronholdt, 1999). Nevertheless, studies have been made seeking to identify more clearly specific features of the people involved in elderly tourism. For example, in a sample of South Korean tourists, Kim, Woo and Uysal (2015) found that there were significant interrelationships between trip experience, leisure life satisfaction, involvement, perceived value, overall quality of life and revisit intention. Shoemaker (1989) found that the elderly tourist market overall was heterogeneous in nature and consisted of various distinct segments. Jang *et al.* (2009) meanwhile, concluded that a sample of Taiwanese tourists were motivated to travel primarily by the desire for novelty. These studies represent a changing demographic segment which has, in some but not all cases, much greater agency over their movements, more resources to invest in self-enrichment activities and, because of the development of tourism-related infrastructure, opportunities to visit more places and undertake more varied types of activity. By contrast, influential works from the past, whose shadows may still be seen in contemporary literature, tend to focus on the negative aspect of ageing (e.g. Cumming & Henry, 1961). It is perhaps not surprising that much of the literature dealing with senior tourism derives from East Asia because rapid economic development in that region has made possible opportunities people could not have imagined previously and, further, possess strong neo-Confucianist influences that promote reverence for older people. It is evident that people from a society with little experience of tourism tend to behave in ways

that people with more experience do, as the move from group travel by coach to individual exploration attests. Since elderly tourism is still a comparatively recent phenomenon, it is deemed appropriate to use a model that bridges the past and the present. The Recife Declaration outlines the factors that destination and tourism managers should bear in mind when planning for senior tourists:

- basic quality factors (e.g. safety and security, sanitation and health, environmental considerations, independence, accessibility, services and facilities and consumer protection standards);
- interaction with the people and places visited;
- educational and cultural experiences;
- entertainment and outdoor activities;
- facilities for social activities and
- appropriate pacing and format of tourism leisure activities (UNWTO, 1996).

This schedule of requirements has formed the basis of the questionnaire that was used to collect data to explore the relationship between customer satisfaction and the provision of services and facilities for senior tourists in Thailand.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Method**

This project adopted a quantitative method of research because an existing theoretical framework was available for testing in a new environment, Samut Prakan province in Thailand. Determining the extent to which this framework is confirmed or otherwise in this new environment represents the claim for contribution to academic knowledge in this paper.

Since the respondents to the questionnaire were Thai people in Thailand, it was deemed appropriate to convert the questionnaire to the Thai language. A pilot test and reverse translation technique were used to ensure accuracy and ability to understand and respond clearly. The original questionnaire was based on the Recife Declaration as described above, with the addition of some demographic characteristic questions necessary to understand the nature of the sample obtained and for hypothesis testing.

The Yamane equation suggests that a sample size of 400 would be sufficient to represent a large population with a 95% level of confidence. Consequently, convenience samples of 100 each were collected at the four research sites described

below. The researchers aimed to obtain a good representation of both men and women and also people in all the various age categories described below.

Once all questionnaires had been collected, data was entered into the open access statistical programme PSPP for analysis with a series of different techniques. The results of this analysis are included in section 4 below.

### 3.2. The Research Sites

Bangkok dominates the statistics for both domestic and international tourist visits. As many as 3.2. million visits by Thai tourists were recorded in 2017 (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2017), which showed an annual rise of 3.4% and revenue of 34,000 million baht (approximately US\$1,133 million), which represented an annual increase of 9.2%. By contrast, the province of Samut Prakan received over the same period 145,000 visitors (+5.0%) with revenue of 219 million baht (US\$7.3 million) (+10.9%). Located to the south of Bangkok and with a coast on the Gulf of Thailand, Samut Prakan is a relatively popular destination for day trippers and offers a combination of different kinds of resorts attractive to Thai tourists, including renowned Buddhist temples and a well-known seafood restaurant. These attractions are not necessarily attractive to international tourist, since signage and styling are only Thai in nature. However, lacking the international renown not just if the capital but regional centres such as Chiang Mai and Pattaya and the famous beaches of islands such as Samui and Phuket, Samut Prakan seems destined to remain of secondary importance only in terms of tourism overall. There is an opportunity, in other words, to develop senior tourism in Samut Prakan as a specialist destination by understanding the needs of this segment of customers and then seeking to develop the necessary services and facilities as required. To gather the necessary data to use as a basis for this purpose, four disparate locations were selected. These are as follows:

**Crocodile Farm and Zoo:** the Crocodile Farm was Thailand's first and built in 1950. It houses some 60,000 crocodiles in various locations and there is a variety of different animal shows and exhibitions, with elephants, tigers and chimpanzees also available. Car parking is provided for coaches and some international tourist (mostly coach parties of Chinese tourists) are to be found there. An entrance fee of 80 baht is charged for adults and 40 baht for children.

**Erawan Museum:** this museum was built by a private collector so as to house his own collection and showcase it to future generations. Most of the exhibits are sacred objects that are likely to resonate more with Thai people than international visitors who do not have a background in Buddhist history. The admission fee is 150 baht for adults and 50 baht for children.

**Muang Boran (Ancient Siam):** this site provides replicas of numerous buildings and activities from Thailand's past, when it was known as Siam. Many different

performances and events are provided. Adults pay 700 baht, children pay 350 baht and there is an entrance fee for vehicles of 400 baht.

**Bang Poo:** this area of land is owned by the Royal Thai Navy but is made available for members of the public to visit without charge. The grounds include a beach, mangrove swamps and a note seafood restaurant. There are no admission fees.

These four research sites are all quite popular with domestic tourists and the Crocodile Farm has some visibility with international tourists: the highway linking it to Bangkok means that it is suitable for a day trip destination. Each has a different appeal to different categories of tourist.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1. General Findings

It is possible to construct mean scores for each of these results, with 1 point given to an answer of ‘very low’ up to a peak of 5 points for an answer of “very high.” The following summary table provides these mean scores, with the higher scores indicating more importance perceived by respondents and lower scores denoting less importance.

**Table 1. Importance of Different Tourism Themes; source: Original Research (n = 400)**

Theme (mean)	Crocodile Farm	Bangpoo	Erawan	Muang Boran	Overall
Nature and Culture	3.51	4.64	4.39	4.14	4.17
Sports and Leisure	2.33	3.80	2.55	2.85	2.86
Food	3.02	4.37	3.32	3.40	3.53
Spirituality and Religion	3.09	3.57	4.77	4.39	4.21
Health and Wellbeing	3.14	3.42	3.47	3.79	3.46
Overall Mean Scores	3.02	3.96	3.70	3.71	3.65

It is evident from these figures that spirituality and religion and nature and culture are the most important factors in the minds of the respondents here. On the other hand, sports and leisure is considered by respondents to be the least important theme by some distance. The other factors are located in the middle of the spectrum of importance. Visitors to the Crocodile Farm are clearly less likely to think any of the factors is important, by some distance, while visitors to Bangpoo were most likely to find themes overall to be important.

In a manner similar to the previous section, it is possible to calculate mean scores for all factors in each location to indicate the relative importance of

each factor to each set of respondents. The results for this process are shown in the table below.

**Table 2. Mean Scores of Different Service Factors; source: Original Research (n = 400)**

Factor (mean score, 5 = high)	Crocodile Farm	Bangpoo	Erawan	Muang Boran	Overall
Clean sites	3.33	3.05	4.21	4.28	3.72
Working hours of sites	3.69	2.96	4.09	4.17	3.73
Use and availability of audio-visual media on-site	3.10	2.99	3.84	3.88	3.46
Guide services	2.96	2.87	3.75	3.79	3.35
Easy access to sites	2.85	2.94	3.84	3.81	3.37
Provision of personal facilities	3.08	2.94	3.65	3.96	3.51
Variety of activities	4.20	3.34	3.75	3.30	3.73
Affordable cost of the sites	4.22	3.49	4.53	4.26	4.13
Variety of sports offered	2.36	3.07	2.08	2.43	2.49
Variety of food events	2.94	4.22	3.23	3.31	3.43
Quality of offered activities	4.34	3.63	4.03	3.66	4.13
Variety of spiritual and religious activities	3.20	3.24	4.66	4.52	3.91
Quality of services offered by specialized personnel	2.71	2.40	2.74	3.27	2.83
Overall	3.31	3.16	3.72	3.74	3.52

These figures reveal that the most important factors are affordable cost and quality of offered activities (both at 4.13), while the least important are variety of sports offered (2.49) and quality of services offered by specialized personnel (2.83). For visitors to the Crocodile Farm, the most important factors were quality of offered activities (4.34), affordable cost of the sites (4.22) and variety of activities (4.20). For visitors to Bangpoo, the most important factors were variety of food events (4.22) and quality of services offered (3.63). For visitors to Erawan, the most important factors were the variety of spiritual and religious activities (4.66), affordable cost of the sites (4.53), clean sites (4.21), working hours of sites (4.09) and quality of offered activities (4.03). For visitors to Muang Boran, the most important factors were the variety of spiritual and religious services (4.52), clean sites (4.28), affordable cost of the sites (4.26) and working hours of sites (4.17).

The next section of the questionnaire asked the respondents to rate the relative level of importance of various general factors and aspects of tourism infrastructure using similar Likert-type scales to those employed in the previous section. The results of these questions are contained in the tables following in this section.



**Table 3. Relative Importance of General Factors and Tourism Infrastructure; source: Original Research**

Factor	Very unimportant	Unimportant	Neither important nor unimportant	Important	Very Important	N
Cuisine	0	1.3	21.3	57.5	20.0	400
Natural environment	0	0	13.3	58.8	28.0	400
Local culture	0.3	0.5	13.5	58.3	27.5	400
Hotel accommodation	41.5	46.3	6.5	5.5	0.3	400
Cottage accommodation	43.0	56.0	0.8	0.3	0	400
Camping	41.8	56.3	0.8	1.0	0.3	400
Security	0.5	1.3	10.8	40.3	47.3	400
Local transportation	23.0	38.3	17.3	9.8	11.8	400
Healthcare and medical services	0.3	11.0	59.5	23.5	5.8	400
Street level experience	0	5.3	53.0	36.8	5.0	400
Available and reliable tourism information	0	7.0	51.0	35.3	6.8	400
Opportunities for socializing	0	2.8	57.5	33.5	6.3	400
Support of guide(s)	0	9.5	50.5	33.5	6.5	400
Quality of airport services	22.5	55.8	28.5	2.0	1.3	400
Sustainability and environmental friendliness	0	2.8	44.3	35.8	17.3	400

These factors may be divided into three broad groups. The first is for those factors which tourists overall consider to be important, with more than 50% of respondents considering them to be “important” or “very important:” cuisine, natural environment, local culture, security and sustainability and environmental friendliness. The second group is of those factors which respondents consider to be unimportant, with 50% or more of respondents overall considering them to be “unimportant” or “very unimportant:” hotel accommodation, cottage accommodation, camping, local transportation and quality of airport services. The third group of factors is those which are generally considered neither important nor unimportant, with no great majority for either side: healthcare and medical services, street level experience, available and reliable tourism information, opportunities for socialising and support of guide(s). These results are indicative to the most common forms of slow tourism, which involve day trips by road vehicle to areas which are comparatively well-known.

Subsequent analysis by demographic characteristics revealed the following:

**Table 4. Significance Levels of General Factors and Tourism Infrastructure Cross-Tabulated with Demographic Characteristics; source: Original Research (n = 400)**

%age	Location	Gender	Age	Education	Marital status	Travel group
Cuisine	0.000**	0.390	0.032*	0.679	0.000**	0.181
Natural environment	0.000**	0.576	0.064	0.264	0.065	0.005**
Local culture	0.000**	0.593	0.531	0.908	0.001**	0.000**
Hotel accommodation	0.000**	0.073	0.093	0.096	0.679	0.000**
Cottage accommodation	0.000**	0.248	0.130	0.067	0.677	0.000**
Camping	0.000**	0.262	0.075	0.203	0.183	0.000**
Security	0.000**	0.443	0.156	0.405	0.008**	0.000**
Local transportation	0.000**	0.294	0.022*	0.468	0.157	0.000**
Healthcare and medical services	0.000**	0.623	0.000**	0.911	0.482	0.233
Street level experience	0.000**	0.962	0.000**	0.877	0.388	0.194
Available and reliable tourism information	0.000**	0.642	0.000**	0.739	0.656	0.082
Opportunities for socializing	0.000**	0.552	0.000**	0.997	0.224	0.527
Support of guide(s)	0.000**	0.321	0.000**	0.764	0.034*	0.517
Quality of airport services	0.000**	0.926	0.000**	0.020*	0.288	0.000**
Sustainability and environmental friendliness	0.000**	0.775	0.000**	0.011*	0.183	0.001**

It is clear from these results that, together, there are three demographic characteristics that help explain the variations in the data (i.e. significance levels of below 0.05 that demonstrate that null hypotheses of no relationship between the variables may be rejected). These are the location of the site, the age of the respondent and the nature of the people with whom the respondent is travelling. There are five significant results with respect to marital status, two for education level and none at all for gender. When designing strategies, therefore, the issue of location should be considered first and then the age of respondents and the nature of the group travelling.

The following tables indicate the analysis of those results which have been shown to be statistically significant above. In this analysis, a mean score has been calculated for each sub-group in the same manner as before, with a score of 1 for an answer of 'very unimportant' up to a score of 5 for 'very important' and the sum divided by the sample size. The results of this are as follows:

**Table 5. General Factors and Tourist Infrastructure Cross-Tabulated with Location; source: Original Research**

Mean scores	Crocodile Farm	Bangpoo	Erawan	Muang Boran	Overall
Cuisine	3.53	3.91	4.16	4.25	3.96
Natural environment	3.84	4.12	4.22	4.41	4.15
Local culture	3.76	4.08	4.24	4.41	4.12
Hotel accommodation	1.51	2.16	1.74	1.66	1.77
Cottage accommodation	1.47	1.77	1.72	1.37	1.58
Camping	1.47	1.84	1.73	1.39	1.62
Security	3.92	4.19	4.13	4.50	4.33
Local transportation	1.71	2.90	2.90	2.45	2.49
Healthcare and medical services	2.85	3.08	3.41	3.60	3.24
Street level experience	2.96	3.19	3.75	3.76	3.42
Available and reliable tourism information	3.00	3.09	3.78	3.80	3.42
Opportunities for socializing	3.06	3.18	3.70	3.79	3.43
Support of guide(s)	2.93	3.09	3.73	3.73	3.37
Quality of airport services	2.59	1.68	1.76	2.12	2.04
Sustainability and environmental friendliness	3.20	3.41	3.96	4.13	3.68
Overall	2.79	2.63	3.26	3.29	3.11

There is a general pattern here that shows that visitors to each destination generally perceive the relative levels of importance of each factor to be the same. However, visitors to Muang Boran and to Erawan find nearly all the factors to be more important than the visitors to Bangpoo and, particularly, the Crocodile Farm do (which is reminiscent of the results already reported).

#### 4.6. Hypothesis Testing

Various factors have been examined to try to estimate their importance to the overall level of satisfaction recorded by respondents. The list of specific and general factors is as follows:

Clean sites
Working hours of sites
Use and availability of audio-visual media on-site
Guide services
Easy access to sites
Provision of personal facilities
Variety of activities
Affordable cost of the sites
Variety of sports offered
Variety of food events
Quality of offered activities
Variety of spiritual and religious activities
Quality of services offered by specialized personnel
Cuisine
Natural environment
Local culture
Hotel accommodation

<b>Cottage accommodation</b>
Camping
<b>Security</b>
Local transportation
<b>Healthcare and medical services</b>
Street level experience
<b>Available and reliable tourism information</b>
Opportunities for socializing
<b>Support of guide(s)</b>
Quality of airport services
<b>Sustainability and environmental friendliness</b>

Which of these factors – and which categories of factor – are most important for trying to explain overall satisfaction? To try to answer these questions, a two-stage process has been adopted. First, the factors are arranged into categories and, second, the impact of these factors is estimated by linear regression and then by factor analysis.

The first step is to arrange the factors into categories:

Tourist infrastructure: easy access to sites; affordable cost of sites; quality of services offered by specialised personnel; hotel accommodation; cottage accommodation; camping; security; local transportation; healthcare and medical services; quality of airport services

Destination management: clean sites; working hours of sites; use and availability of audio-visual media on-site; provision of personal facilities; variety of activities; quality of offered activities; available and reliable tourism information; support of guides

Travel experience: variety of sports offered; variety of religious and spiritual activities; cuisine; natural environment; local culture; street level experience; opportunities for socialising; sustainability and environmental friendliness.

The hypothesis testing then continued with the linear regression, the results of which are as follows.

**Table 6. Linear Regression Results for Hypothesis Testing; source: Original Research (n = 400)**

<b>Tourist Infrastructure</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>Sig</b>	<b>Destination Management</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>Sig</b>	<b>Travel Experience</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>Sig</b>
<b>Easy access to sites</b>	0.02	0.853	Cleanliness of sites	0.01	0.928	Variety of sports offered	0.02	0.606
<b>Affordable cost of sites</b>	-0.12	0.024*	Working hours of sites	0.07	0.376	Variety of religious and spiritual activities	-0.01	0.911
<b>Quality of services offered</b>	-0.13	0.017*	Use and availability of	0.11	0.187	Cuisine	0.11	0.076

<b>by specialised personnel</b>			audio-visual media on-site						
<b>Hotel accommodation</b>	0.03	0.653	Provision of personal facilities	- 0.05	0.469	Natural environment	- 0.06	0.537	
<b>Cottage accommodation</b>	0.15	0.183	Variety of activities	- 0.12	0.012*	Local culture	- 0.01	0.903	
<b>Camping</b>	-0.02	0.627	Quality of offered activities	0.06	0.213	Street level experience	0.10	0.291	
<b>Security</b>	0.05	0.332	Available and reliable tourism information	- 0.27	0.007**	Opportunities for socialising	0.14	0.209	
<b>Local transportation</b>	0.01	0.781	Support of guides	0.11	0.272	Sustainability and environmental friendliness	- 0.05	0.392	
<b>Healthcare and medical services</b>	0.02	0.733							
<b>Quality of airport services</b>	-0.06	0.187							

These results indicate that there is comparatively little influence on the overall level of satisfaction represented by the individual categories identified here. It appears to be true that the actual location visited is more influential in explaining the overall level of satisfaction of the slow tourists visiting them.

The hypothesis testing results are:

H1: there is a relationship between tourist infrastructure and overall satisfaction: partly supported

H2: there is a relationship between destination management and overall satisfaction: partly supported

H3: there is a relationship between travel experience and overall satisfaction: not supported

Since the categories proposed here have not proved very successful in identifying the influence on overall satisfaction, it is possible to question whether a different arrangement of factors would be more successful in this regard. In a case such as this, factor analysis may be used to explore the main groupings of factors existing within the sample. This is explored in the next section.

Using varimax rotation, the analysis extracted four factors with Eigenvalues exceeding 1.0 and these factors combined explained 59.75% of total variance. This is quite a confidence inspiring result.

**Table 7. Variance Explained by Extracted Factors**

Component	Eigenvalue (rotation sum of squared loadings)	Variance explained (%)
1	5.54	31.74
2	2.35	13.45
3	1.31	7.51
4	1.23	7.04

*Source: Original Research (n = 400)*

The first of the factors is the most important of all the extracted factors, much more so than the second factor with the third and fourth lagging further behind and with approximately equal importance. Examination of the factor loadings revealed the following:

**Table 8. Factor Loadings of Principal Components Extracted**

Component	Variable	Loading
<b>1: Pilgrims</b>	Variety of religious and spiritual events	0.79
	Cleanliness of sites	0.72
	Provision of personal facilities	0.70
	Easy access to site	0.64
<b>2: Tourists</b>	Local transportation	1.07
	Hotel accommodation	0.64
<b>3: Experiencers</b>	Variety of food events	0.75
	Variety of sports offered	0.57
<b>4: Activists</b>	Variety of activities	0.68
	Quality of offered activities	0.48
	Quality of airport services	0.38

*Source: Original Research*

It is evident that, in this case, it is possible to use the factors extracted by the analysis to identify four segments of actors within the overall sample of slow tourists. The first of these has been labelled 'pilgrims' and they are particularly interested in the variety of religious and spiritual events, as well as the cleanliness of sites, the provision of personal facilities and easy access to sites. The second group has been referred to as tourists, since they are mostly interested in local transportation and hotel accommodation. It is possible to consider these tourists to be more independently minded and willing to spend longer in the destination, with interest in multiple possible destinations. The third group has been labelled as experiencers since they are interested mostly in the variety of food events available and the variety of sports offered. It seems likely that these two variables are related to sea activities, with food involving fish and seafood and sports relating to coastal and maritime activities. The fourth group has been labelled as activists and this is the only group to attach importance to the quality of airport services, suggesting that this group is

more likely to fly in from a more distant location and to have done so based on the variety and quality of activities offered.

#### **4.7. Summary of Research Findings**

The quantitative research consisted of 400 questionnaires completed by face-to-face interviews with slow tourists by the researcher at four different locations in Samut Prakan province. One hundred questionnaires were completed at each of the four research sites and efforts were taken to obtain a broadly representative sample in terms of gender, age and mode of travel.

It has been found that there are distinctive group of people visiting the different research sites and they appear to be interested in different aspects of the travel experience depending on where it is that they have gone. There are opportunities to improve the services provided to different groups based on their expressed preferences.

The literature informing the development of tourism in developing economies has not been very effective in describing the experience of slow tourists in Thailand in this sample. New ways of looking at the meaning of slow tourism are required and these are considered in the discussion section below.

### **5. Discussion**

The era of slow tourism may be seen to have developed from the rise of 'new tourism,' which was a reaction to the mass tourism that developed as a result of low cost international flights, blue-sky inter-governmental agreements and the development of tourism infrastructure in terms of ease of booking, awareness of facilities and information, money-changing and the development of new destinations so as to provide a range of options that may be segmented according to demand. This form of mass tourism had negative impacts in terms, for example, of the physical impact on locations that became completely dependent on incoming tourists and the environmental impact. The new tourism movement was a response to this and was initially characterised by societal and environmental consciousness and the search for authenticity (Poon, 1989). Authenticity was viewed as a means of entering the back region of a destination when the mass tourist enters the front region (MacCannell, 1973). New tourists sought opportunities that were small in scale and minimal in impact, often being associated with niche segments such as sports, ethnic and diaspora tourism (Conway & Timms, 2010).

This approach further developed with the emergence of the slow living concept, which rejects many of the trappings of the contemporary world in the form of fast food, surface impressions and the intermediation of social media between observer and the real world. This movement offers not just a way to enjoy life more but a

means of reassessing the position of the individual with respect to society, identity, neo-liberal models of rationality and the shift towards market-driven politics in the advanced countries where this phenomenon is most commonly witnessed (Leitch, 2003).

In the tourism context, slow tourism relates to the mode and purpose of travel and the ways in which services and experiences are consumed by those involved. There is a clear link between this concept and mindfulness, which is an important part of the Theravadin Buddhism that is dominant in Thailand. This context is composed of three parts:

- (i) Sati: awareness of the present moment;
- (ii) Appamada: awareness suffused with a sense of ethical care and
- (iii) Sampajanna: awareness suffused with a sense of spiritual development (Lomas, 2016).

It may be argued that only the first of these three meanings has been understood and adopted by western society. That means there are differences between normal tourism, slow tourism and Thai slow tourism (see Table x below):

**Table 9. Characteristics of Normal, Slow and Thai Slow Tourism**

Characteristic	Normal Tourism	Slow Tourism	Thai Slow Tourism
<b>Mode</b>	Integrative	Non-integrative	Non-integrative physically but integrative spiritually
<b>Experience</b>	Maximised overall	Individual episodes maximised	Individual experiences integrated
<b>Satisfaction factors</b>	Experience, hygiene, value for money	Authenticity	Spiritual and physical hygiene
<b>Physical and environmental impact</b>	Significant	Reduced	Aim to contribute

*Source: Original Research*

This table, based in part on the literature discussed in Chapter 2 and based in part on the research presented in this chapter, indicates the differences not just between normal and slow tourism but also between slow tourism and Thai slow tourism. It is evident from this that, in order to increase the prevalence of Thai slow tourism and its success, the following should be borne in mind:

- Thai slow tourists want to explore their spiritual lives in various ways;
- Physical characteristics of destinations are important but issues of spiritual hygiene are also important;
- Thai slow tourist aim not just to minimise their physical impact on the environment but aim to improve the situation.

The identification of this sector represents a contribution to knowledge.



## 6. Conclusion

This paper has reported on quantitative research involving 400 completed questionnaires from four tourism destinations in Samut Prakan province in Thailand aimed at determining whether a conceptual framework linking customer satisfaction and service and facilities provision based on the UNWTO's Recife Declaration accurately describes the beliefs and experiences of Thai slow tourists included in the convenience sample achieved. It was found that Thai slow tourists have some additional spiritual beliefs and behaviours that were not fully incorporated in the original declaration, which should, as a result, be updated to reflect this reality and in the case of other societies where similar phenomena may also be discerned.

Of course, research of this nature is always subject to various limitations of time and space which are acknowledged here. There is certainly a need for future research to explore the extent to which the results obtained here might be replicated elsewhere. This might happen in Thailand and also in other countries where Theravadin Buddhism is also influential in society.

The gap between the desires of Thai slow tourists as expressed in this research and those services and facilities currently available indicate various ways in which tourism destination managers and members of relevant government agencies could improve the offerings currently available. In particular, awareness of what kinds of services and experiences slow tourists actually would enjoy should be investigated thoroughly in the context of how these services might be monetised.

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